

Christus Victor

TITLE

It has been a difficult 20 months or so. For many Christians it has been a huge disappointment as after lockdown there has been a continuing experience of church that has been less than what we had and we've felt some of that here.

POPPIES

This coming week we are going to remember again the sacrifice that so many people made in two world wars and other conflicts. At the end of each world war, there was the deep sadness for the loss of so many – something we mark every year. LLOYD GEORGE After each war there was the hope that their legacy should be a country fit for heroes as Lloyd George put it after WW1.

NOBODY WANTS YOU

In reality, the consequence of WW1 was is that it created massive social and economic problems: the hope of a land fit for heroes evaporated into the turmoil of the General Strike and the Depression.

Likewise, in 1945, with the sacrifices of five years war and the destruction that came with it fresh in their minds, people wanted a new world based on something different from the past. That's why this guy got to be the first post-war PM. CLEMENT ATTLEE In the first few years after the war, his government made huge changes, the NHS being its most lasting legacy. Was all a bed of roses? No it was tough going. It took over a decade for Britain to recover from war. There was massive social upheaval, huge changes to the economy, rationing for years, and austerity. By the end of the 1959, politicians were proclaiming success. HAROLD MACMILLAN. Remember this quote?

What was achieved after WW2 illustrates Atlee's somewhat prophetic words of 1922 that winning the peace was an act of will which the nation and its politicians got behind in the 1950s. Our politics and political parties aren't like that any more – and more's the pity.

COMMUNION SLIDE This gives us a great perspective of the spiritual victory that Christ achieved on the cross for us. When we come to communion, we often remind ourselves of the substitutionary aspects of the death of Jesus His body was broken and His blood shed for my sins. He took my place.

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But the Bible also gives us another aspect of the death of Jesus and that was that the cross, His death and His resurrection was the most decisive victory in the history of the world. His is Christ, the Victor (that's what Christus Victor means). It's an important perspective we need also to focus on when we remember His death and resurrection. Over what or whom was Jesus victor?

OVER THE DEVIL & OVER PRINCIPALITIES AND POWERS

Jesus was victorious over the devil and over all the principalities and powers in the heavenly places which Paul talks about in Ephesians (we looked at that last week). And when we decided to trust and follow Jesus, we became inheritors of that victory and the the hope of peace it brings. The death of Jesus on the cross redeemed us from the power the devil has over us. He's a beaten enemy who refuses to surrender so we find ourselves still in a spiritual battle. As we saw last week, we are more than equipped to deal with all of that in Christ because of His victory on the cross. The only hold satan can ever have over us is when we allow him opportunity to get at us when we are not walking with Jesus as we should.

OVER SIN AND DEATH

On the cross Jesus became victor over death. The consequence of human sin is death. This table stands as a mark of the broken body and shed blood of Jesus. When Jesus rose again he showed Himself to be victorious over sin and its consequence: death. Here's what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:

56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

As we have trusted and followed Jesus, we have become victors too.

OVER FEAR

Because Jesus has been victorious he has destroyed the greatest power over us – our own fear. No longer can the devil or any human being suggest that we are not good enough for God, that there is no hope for us, that God does not answer our prayers, that God may reject us if we don't cut the mustard in life. Jesus was victorious over fear. We read this.

Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies.

Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died – more than that, who was raised to life – is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.

We are raised to new life, we are the people of God; recipients of His promises. Jesus is victor and we are victorious too. When I was young we used to sing a little chorus. Here's what it said.

ON THE VICTORY'S SIDE

It's a song of assured faith. It's bold it's brash. We are victorious!

ARE WE LIVING VICTORIOUSLY OR....?

Aren't we? It true in our lives right now or do the words seem hollow? We know we should be victorious but... we don't feel that way. Where is our motivation to wage the peace of God?

ATTLEE SLIDE AGAIN

In Jesus we **have** won the war, and we **are** citizens of heaven children of the living God. Heaven **is** our home but we sojourn here. And here the enemy is still active. In this world and through our lives here as God's people we are called we wage peace and life as we share Good News with those that need to receive the victory of Christ in their lives too.

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And as in postwar periods after military conflicts, waging peace has its ups and downs as we face those who don't want the peace we offer. Other times we have to face the massive challenges of a fallen world – like the pandemic – which are completely unprecedented in our experience.

WINNING PEACE AND LIFE IN THE POST COVID WORLD

For us the experience of Covid has been difficult, damaging, traumatic, demotivating. The enemy would seek to attack us through it and we must trust our Victor as we continue to follow our call of waging peace of God. Let's be realistic: against this background it takes time to rebuild, it takes time to heal. It takes time. Some of what we had has been taken away – so where next? Yet, in Christ we are victors still, so how do we regain our zeal, our commitment, our trust our vision?

The first step to answering that question comes in our passage this morning.

VERSE For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

We are loved by our Saviour. And what is the most important bond you have with one you love? You trust them implicitly. In a world of uncertainty, this is the time to trust and follow Jesus afresh, which brings us to the second promise in these verses:

VERSE We are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

More than conquerors. We have already won. That's the message of Christ the Victor. This is what this table stands for. Let's commit ourselves afresh to follow the One who loved us and let Him lead us through life, however unknown in the power of His Holy Spirit within us. Let's pray.

TITLE

Father, as we come to you today, we recognise that the last 20 months have been unprecedented for all of us. We acknowledge the hurt, the damage, and discouragement that we have felt through lockdown and isolation. We ask your forgiveness for it, particularly when we allowed the accuser to add to our situation. We recognise that in these difficulties we lost sight of the victory that is already ours in Christ. Thank you that You are a forgiving Father.

By the power of Your Spirit we pray that You will heal, invigorate, re-enthuse, fire us up and envision us for everything You want us to become in Christ. Build our faith up so we will counter the discouragement of the evil one. May we fulfil Your purposes so that what ends us is so much greater than what went before.

May we know Your presence now as we come around this table. May Jesus have all the glory
We ask it in His name. Amen.

For Reflection & Discussion

1. How did you fare spiritually during the Lockdowns and the pandemic generally? Was it difficult? Was there anything uplifting and positive? How are you now finding church as it's so different from before?
2. What sorts of things do you think hold you back from living a victorious Christian life? How do you think the verses from Romans 8:31-37 may help you to overcome the gap you may feel between what the Bible tells us and how you feel right now?
3. Consider the following verses, some of which we read last week. Ephesians 1:18-21, 1 John 4:4, Colossians 2:15, John 10:10 and John 8:44b. How apparent in our church and in the community do you think the influence of principalities and powers is? How can our knowledge of Jesus' victory help us to address them?